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AFGHANISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Website Will Be Key Information Source

USAID supports transparency and public outreach through website development



Photo: USAID/CEPPS

An editor with the program (left) completes an interview as part of the "Weekly Interview" segment of the website.

Three editors trained through the program have been credited with writing and transcribing more than 119 high quality stories into the English, Dari, and Pashto languages in less than one year.

Distributing accurate and unbiased information in a country without a tradition of free press is a challenge. However, USAID, through the Journalist Training Program under the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), developed a tri-language website (English-Dari-Pashto) that delivers content related to politics, society, and the history of Afghanistan.

The website, www.afghanistanvotes.com, was established in July 2009. It quickly became a resource for journalists on election related matters, receiving visitors from 57 countries and 2,536 hits just prior to the August presidential elections. Spurred by the success, the website has been renamed www.bamdad.af (*bamdad* is the Dari word for "wake-up time").

With a new name and the .af domain, the website has developed an "Afghan face" that, along with a renewed image and revised layout, will transform it into a future key source of information for Afghan media, international press, and the public on matters related to the democratization of Afghanistan and CEPPS program activities. Editor Jamaluddin Temori said, "Working on the website and receiving journalistic training has provided me with an outstanding opportunity to gain experience and knowledge with online media. I am helping my people find a way forward from war, as well as providing unbiased information to help stabilize the foundation of our newly based democracy."

The CEPPS program strengthens the ability of political stakeholders to articulate and organize during elections, as well as to increase public awareness and oversight of the electoral process. CEPPS also aims to increase broad-based participation in the electoral process at the national and sub-national level. A sub-component of CEPPS, the Journalist Training Program, bridges the information gap between the public and rapidly changing events through the Government of Afghanistan.